

The University of New Mexico

Office of the President
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

October 20, 2006

Honorable Tom Coburn, Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management
Government Information and International Security
Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your letter of July 27, 2006, in which you requested that I answer several questions concerning earmarked federal research dollars the University of New Mexico has received over the past six years.

The University of New Mexico is one of the nation's leading research universities and receives millions of dollars in federal funding, both competitively won and received through Congressional earmarks, for programs and projects of national, regional and local significance. We are very proud of the scientific research conducted on our campus and the research collaborations we have with other universities across the country and internationally, and with national research laboratories such as Los Alamos and Sandia. In 2005, the University of New Mexico received \$295,445,430 million in contract and grants, ranking the University among the top 50 in the nation of public research institutions. At the same time, our institution is one of the nation's leading Hispanic Serving Institutions and one of only two with a Carnegie Very High Research designation. We have the largest percentage of minority students of any flagship university.

With respect to earmarks provided by the Congress to the University of New Mexico, Congressionally earmarked funding for research has had an extraordinarily positive and dramatic effect on the capabilities of our scientists and graduate students to conduct research important to the State of New Mexico and the nation. This funding has provided the University of New Mexico with facilities, equipment and research program funding that has enabled us to make significant contributions in many important research areas and to partner with the federal research laboratories located in our state such as Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories. Without this earmarked funding, UNM would

not have been able to compete for millions in competitive federal research grants or provide the quality and breadth of education we have delivered to our students.

It should also be noted that the Congress, in an effort to address the inability of universities in certain less affluent states to fairly compete for federal research grants, created EPSCoR, a program which sets aside certain amounts of federal research funding each year for disadvantaged states. New Mexico is an EPSCoR state and UNM has benefited from this program. The combination of EPSCoR set asides and Congressionally earmarked research funding goes a long way to level the playing field in the distribution of federal research dollars. This is indeed important because while the elite research universities are highly capable in many research areas, they are not the only institutions which can contribute to scientific breakthroughs. Enabling more universities in our nation to compete for federal research grants will dramatically improve the science and technology that will be produced.

A couple of key examples of University of New Mexico research projects include the Math and Science Teacher Academy and the Center for Surveillance and Analysis of Emerging Infectious Diseases. The Academy focused on a very critical area of education our nation needs to address – math, science and technology instruction. We need to produce students who are literate in math and science, a critical component of the NCLB initiative, and who can become our next generation of innovators and researchers. This process begins with developing teachers who excel in math and science instruction. Excellent teachers will produce outstanding students. The academies were successful in beginning to address a very significant problem in student learning.

The establishment of the Center for Surveillance has allowed for a collaborative environment for investigators studying emerging infections and diseases, including funding for training new postdoctoral fellows in handling high biocontainment pathogens and for development of vaccine candidates for Hantavirus, a fatal disease that exists in this part of the country. As a result of the success that was initiated with this funding, infectious diseases is one of the four main research thrust areas at the Health Sciences Center. UNM HSC is nationally known for its work in biodefense and margining infections.

With respect to how our institution sets a measure for standards to achieve quality and outcomes for entities, programs, projects or services receiving assistance through earmarks or appropriations, the University has several ways in which measures and standards are set. The measures and standards are critically dependent on the nature of the project and the agency through which the money flows. Because most earmarks and appropriations arrive in the form of a grant or contract, the first level of measures involves satisfying the statement of work. Often implicit in the award is the dissemination of the results. Other measures of success are set in the internal approval process before a request is made.

You also asked whether our institution has a stated policy regarding Congressional earmarks and if we have a policy regarding partnering in research projects with other

universities who may have a differing policy. The University does not have a stated policy on this topic. It does have a set of processes and procedures relating to requests for Congressional earmarks and appropriations. In brief all requests must be approved by a Vice President, reviewed and endorsed by an internal committee and approved by the President and Board of Regents before they are permitted to go forward. Some but not all of the criteria used to judge proposals are: strategic value to the institution, additional costs to the institution, sustainability plan, can it be funded through a competitive process and value to the state and nation. Our earmark requests are also reviewed closely by members and staff of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation, and in particular, Senator Pete Domenici, a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and our local Congresswoman, Heather Wilson. We do not have a policy concerning partnering with institutions with differing policies. In fact, this has never been an issue.

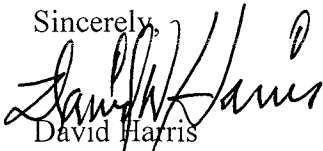
You also asked if our institution has considered hiring a lobbyist to assist your institution in attaining familiarity with the opportunities that may exist to obtain Federal funds for research – such as the earmarking process. Our institution has hired a lobbying firm to act as consultants to us on federal departments and agencies and with respect to the actions of the Congress with respect to federally funded research and education policy. This lobbying firm also provides strategic advice about federally funded research projects, both competitively awarded and awarded through earmarks.

Your final question asked whether the University of New Mexico finds that Congressionally earmarked funds have contributed in a substantive way to our academic institution. The answer is that Congressional earmarks, which have provided the University of New Mexico with funds for buildings, research equipment and instrumentation, and research programming, have indeed had a significant impact on the growth of our university over the past several decades.

Universities such as the University of New Mexico, located in states which have significant populations of poor and disadvantaged minorities, including many Native Americans, have traditionally found it difficult to compete with established, elite universities in winning federal research grants. Earmarked federal funding, which has been strongly supported by our New Mexico Congressional Delegation, has provided the research infrastructure we have needed to better compete for federal research dollars. In turn, the quality of our research has grown dramatically, as has our contribution to the national research effort. Without the action of our Congressional Delegation to secure these earmarks, there would have been no other source for this funding.

Thank you for your interest in the University of New Mexico.

Sincerely,



David Harris
President